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# **The future of Polish agriculture and rural areas in view of European integration**

**Main results of the survey**

**&**

## **Agricultural and Information Policy In the Pre-Accession Period**

**Recommendations**

**February 2000**

## INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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<b>I.</b>	<b>THE FUTURE OF POLISH AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS IN VIEW OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION</b>
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## **1. Introduction**

The preparation of Polish agriculture for membership in the European Union constitutes one of the most important and at the same time one of the most complex pre-accession issues. It requires the profound restructuring of the agricultural sector, which will lead to both economic and social transformations that will in turn have a direct impact on the life of the rural population. In this context the key issue is on the one hand, the readiness of farmers themselves to initiate the changes, and on the other, their readiness to adapt to new or changing circumstances.

In June 1999 the Institute of Public Affairs conducted a survey entitled „The Future of Polish agriculture and countryside in view of integration with the European Union as seen by farmers and the rural population", which was aimed at establishing how rural communities perceive the present situation as well as the future of the countryside, their own farms and family, bearing in mind prospective European integration. This is the first national public opinion survey of farmers and rural residents in seven years. The authors are acknowledged experts in agriculture and rural matters: Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska Ph.D., Professor Maria Halamska, Professor Andrzej Rosner and Professor Jerzy Wilkin. A full elaboration of the results of the survey will be published by the Institute of Public Affairs in March 2000 in a book „Peasant or farmer? Poland's membership in the European Union - the hopes and anxieties of the rural population". This report presents the book's most significant conclusions.

The Survey of the Institute of Public Affairs was financed by the Office of the Committee for European Integration and PHARE through Delegation of the European Commission in Poland.

## **2. The current situation of Polish agriculture and rural communities**

At present there are about 14.7 million people living in rural areas in Poland, constituting approximately one-third of the entire population. Generally speaking, this population may be divided into two groups: the peasant (about 54%) and non-peasant population (46%). A characteristic feature of the peasant group is farming based on family labour (although in many cases family members do hold other jobs and hence other sources of income). The non-peasant population does not engage in farming per se, but does perform seasonal farm labour.

Over the last decade a significant change was observed in the structure of the sources of income of both of the above groups. As regards non-peasant families, in 1988, 65% earned their living by working, the rest from un-earned sources of income (disability or retirement pensions, benefits of various kinds etc.) In the mid 1990's work constituted the main source of livelihood for only 41% of these families. Similar changes were noted among peasant families; the proportion of families with farming providing their main source of income fell from 51% to 42%. The number of families earning their main income from work outside agriculture fell from 30% to 27%, while the proportion of families relying on non-employment related sources rose from 19% to 31%.

The growth of the role of non-employment related sources of income among the rural population is confirmed by an analysis of individual sources of income of persons who have an independent source of income. This is a joint effect composed of two factors: an increase in the number of persons entitled to non-employment related income, and an increase in the relative importance of these means in families with several sources of income (that is earned salaries as well as non-employment related funds).

One of the reasons for the increase in the number of persons who are entitled to non-employment related incomes in the countryside is the introduction in the early 1990's of unemployment benefits. This, however, is not the main reason for the increase, which is indicated by the fact that about 85-90% of those registered as being unemployed are members of non-peasant families, while the shift in the structure of income relates to both groups of the rural population.

However, unemployment concerns both groups of the rural population, although revealed (registered) unemployment is a characteristic of the non-peasant population. In the peasant population difficulty in finding employment is concealed within the agricultural sector (often referred to as agrarian overpopulation). This „hidden” unemployment is primarily due to the family nature of farms, where every member of the family will find something to do (even though it may be redundant from the point of view of the farm itself).

The scale of revealed unemployment in the countryside, which is defined as the **social problem of lack of employment**, is difficult to determine. Statistics, which make use of formal definitions, provide figures ranging from 980 thousand (registered) to 760 thousand (Survey of the Economic Activity of the Population, General Statistical Office). However, detailed statistics reveal that **not all of the unemployed included in these figures in fact have no income or are ready to take on employment**. The number of people who are genuinely unemployed is most probably much lower than that quoted above.

Apart from the kinds of unemployment described above, there is also **unemployment concealed in peasant farming**, which, according to the General Census of Agriculture, may be estimated at about 830 thousand. This category of the unemployed includes persons who may actually work on farms (according to the person who manages the farm) but their work is redundant in the sense that the person could be employed elsewhere without undermining the farm’s production. Almost half these people (about 400 thousand) were previously employed outside the agricultural sector.

Another form of hidden unemployment in the agricultural sector is the **fractional unemployment**, the scale of which is difficult to determine. This results from the fact that over the course of a year farm workers actually work fewer hours than the assumed norm for full-time employment. The sum of all „fractional surpluses” of work time of all those employed in farming equals a number of „fractional unemployed” which is probably no less than 200 thousand.

**The size of the surpluses on the rural labour market quoted above is up-to-date**, which means that it does not take into account the demographic processes or potential surpluses which will result from the restructuring of the agricultural sector.

At present age groups belonging to a demographic high are reaching productive age while those forming a demographic low are going into retirement. In effect, the **reproduction of population resources of productive age is expanding**. It is estimated that in rural areas this will mean an annual **increase of about 140-150 thousand within this age group**. In view of the limited opportunities for urban migration, almost all those who reach productive age will stay in rural areas, which in turn will exert additional pressure on rural and local employment markets.

The process of restructuring Poland's agricultural sector has been analysed from various view points: a concentration of production in a smaller number of farms is already taking place, but reducing employment in the agricultural sector has encountered difficulties caused by a lack of alternative employment for those working on farms. The need for restructuring is illustrated by the fact that agriculture currently produces 6% of GDP, while it accounts for as much as 19% of overall employment in the national economy. This indicates that **productivity in agriculture is several times lower than in the entire economy**, consequently employment in the agricultural sector cannot yield a socially acceptable level of income.

The effects of the restructuring of the agricultural sector on the job market are difficult to determine. Moreover, these effects will be spread over time, as the transformation of the agricultural sector will last a number of years. However, in order to assess the scale of these effects, it may be estimated that if Polish agriculture were to aim towards achieving the early 1990's model of German agriculture (social, natural and technological conditions justify this direction of change), meeting this goal would mean a decrease in the number of farm employees of about 2.7 million. It must be noted that German agriculture is undergoing further change, including a further decrease in employment.

It must be emphasised that over the next few years, the situation on the rural employment market will play a decisive role in resolving the problems of rural areas and the agricultural sector.



### **3. The characteristic features of farmers against the background of the rural population**

In Poland the term „farmer” is broad and imprecise. When attempting to present the attitude of farmers towards Poland’s integration with the European Union we must first try to find a precise answer to following the apparently trivial question: **who is a farmer?**

**Statistics define farmers as people who tend farms over one hectare in size.** On the basis of this definition the peasant population in Poland (i.e. people working on a farm holding, not just a plot of arable land) would amount to 8.245 million people, the majority of whom (7.498 million) live in the countryside. In 1996 this amounted to 21.3% of the entire population of the country.

If this broad criterion of „farmerhood” were to be compared, for instance, a to contributions paid to the Farmers Social Security Office (KRUS), only slightly over half of the examined group would count as „farmers”: only 55% of farmers in fact pay social security contributions to KRUS. Over a quarter (27%) of the farmers, as defined by the broad criterion of tending a farm, pay a non-agricultural social security contribution (ZUS – Social Security Institution), and one in five (18% of those polled) either don’t pay premiums at all or are no longer required to. This is understandable, as 20% of those surveyed state that the basic income for their family is derived from un-earned sources (disability or retirement pension, social benefit).

**An important criterion which significantly narrows the definition of who can be regarded as a farmer is that of income earned exclusively from farming activities.** The General Census of Agriculture conducted in 1996 investigated the sources of income of people with connections to agriculture. This revealed that in 1996 **about 37% of families holding farms in Poland earned their living solely or primarily from agriculture. This in turn accounted for 36.27% of the peasant population (3.617 million).**

If we adopt the source of income as a criterion for „farmerhood”, the initial large group of farmers may be divided into four sub-categories, with varying degrees of dependence on farming:

- I. „Farmers”, for whom working on a farm constitutes the sole source of income (F).
- II. „Mainly Farmers”, for whom working on a farm constitutes the main but not sole source of income. Apart from this the family possesses other, additional sources (MF)
- III. „Additionally Farmers”, whose main livelihood is earned outside agriculture, while the farm provides an additional source of income (AF).
- IV. „Formally Farmers”, for whom the farm or farming do not generate an income which is decisive in the standard of living of the family (FF).

**Table 1.** A socio-demographic break-down of farmer groups (data in %)

Criteria	Group I „F”	Group II „MF”	Group III „AF”	Group IV „FF”
Share in surveyed group	27	23	32	15
KRUS contribution payers	92	66	28	28
Self identification as farmers	95	81	28	26

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

**In order to distinguish the farmer group it is useful to introduce the sociological criterion of self-awareness**, which also narrows the broad group of „farmers”, reducing it by 40%. This clearly shows that no less than **40% of the „farmers” surveyed do not perceive themselves as farmers**. In this respect farmer identity does not correspond to the mere fact of owning a farm, but rather to the income gained directly from farming activities.

In this context the question who actually is a farmer seems deeply justified. In view of the income structure and self identity of land owners, the conclusion that all farm holders are indeed farmers seems inaccurate. „Farmerhood” should not be defined by automatic membership in a statistical group solely on the basis of land ownership, just as using the premises of a surgery does not automatically classify anyone as a physician. Farmers are not simply people who own or use a farm, but rather those who occupy a particular position in the social division of labour.

Working on these assumptions the rural community of „farmers” could exclude those who, while making use of a farm land, do not derive any income from it. It is also the case that the group identified as „additionally farmers”, cannot be classified as farmers per se due to the fact that **farming is not decisive to their standard of living**. The share of these farmers in market supply is insignificant and they have no influence on the overall scale of Polish agricultural production. Thus, due to the objective and subjective reasons mentioned above, this group should be excluded from the community of farmers. This is primarily not a statistical operation, but rather **a social and political one: if these people are not farmers, who are they?** This particular group must find a structural position in society, which in turn will facilitate not only a more realistic approach to Polish agriculture, but will also define the position of the group more clearly. Its actual and potential marginalisation remains hidden behind the façade of „farmerhood”.

#### **4. The role of the state in transforming Polish agriculture**

Agriculture is the subject to a much broader range of regulation and government support than any other sector of the Polish economy. This is the case in most developed countries. The interventionist, regulatory and protective function of the state regarding agriculture is particularly visible in the European Union member states. Attempts made to limit this function, in favour of granting more scope to global market forces, have been very slow in the European Union and have met with strong opposition from farmers.

Sociological research conducted in Poland yields a picture of farmers and rural residents extremely dissatisfied with their own financial standing and very critical of the effects of systemic transformation in Poland, and government activities with respect to the problems of agriculture and the countryside in general. Apart from this critical attitude, the rural population manifests a feeling of helplessness in the obscure world of market mechanisms and a nostalgia for the elaborate regulatory and protective role of the state towards agriculture. **Paradoxically, Polish farmers, who successfully resisted collectivisation and state control under socialism, have become the most ardent supporters of state regulation under democratic and free market conditions.**

As many as 95% of the farmers polled and almost 90% of rural residents consider the present situation in agriculture to be bad or very bad, and primarily blame the government for this situation. The current government has only 20% of its supporters among the rural population (only 13% among farmers). One may ask why rural residents are so highly critical of the government? In large part this is due to the perceived lack of a government agricultural and rural development policy, and its lack of initiative with respect to agriculture.

**Table 2.** Current government policy and prospects for the improvement of the situation in agriculture (data in %).

Does current government policy, in your opinion, provide an opportunity for the improvement of the situation in agriculture, or not?	Rural population	Farmers
Definitely yes	1	1
Probably yes	13	8
Probably no	38	33
Definitely not	38	52
Difficult to say	10	6

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

Farmers are more critical of government policy towards agriculture than the rural population as a whole. Among the farmers, the highest percentage of negative opinion is found among those engaged in commercial farming and owners of large farms (over 10 standard hectares).

**Not only do farmers negatively evaluate the current government policy towards agriculture, they also believe that the government does not have any agricultural and rural development policy (opinion of 69% of rural residents and 82% of farmers).**

One may ask which model of economic relations in agriculture and related areas would Polish farmers prefer? It is clearly both statist and paternalistic. According to this model, the state should set the prices for basic agricultural products and take the responsibility for purchasing and selling these products. State-owned enterprises should dominate in the food processing industry. It seems that after 10 years of market reform in Poland, less than one-third of farmers

support the market system and private ownership in agriculture related industries (purchasing, distribution and food processing). As many as 85% of rural residents and over 90% of farmers believe state involvement in agriculture to be insufficient.

**Table 3.** Desirable models of economic relations in agriculture and related industry (data in %)

<b>Which, in your opinion, is better for agriculture? Is it better if:</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Prices in agriculture are determined primarily by the state	58	69
Prices in agriculture are determined primarily by the market	30	23
Difficult to say	12	8
Contracting and distribution is conducted by the state	64	76
Contracting and distribution is conducted by private companies	23	17
Difficult to say	13	7
Food processing is dominated by state enterprises	53	60
Food processing is dominated by private companies	30	27
Difficult to say	17	13
Farmers operate independently	30	38
Farmers operate jointly in producers' associations	52	49
Difficult to say	18	13

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

The fact that a decisive role is attributed to the government (state) in shaping the economic situation of agriculture, results from the general perception of the conditions for the development of agriculture. The rural population and farmers see the key factors influencing this situation as external to their own farm and outside the agricultural sector as a whole. According to the rural population improvement in the situation of Polish agriculture primarily depends on:

- the government's agricultural policy (64% of indications)
- price increases for agricultural products (59%)
- the growth of the Polish economy (35%)

- the situation on the world market (19%)

The rural population believes that farmers cannot do much to improve their circumstances; almost everything depends on macroeconomic, even global, factors and on the will and the involvement of state authorities. It is clear that according to the rural population, a decade of transformation in Poland has not resulted in the creation of systemic conditions facilitating the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity and the development of civil society. The principle of subsidiarity, which is fundamental to the political, economic and social order of the European Union, is based on the creation of a system whereby the welfare, career and social standing of citizens depends first and foremost on their own activity, hard work and skills, secondly on actions collectively inspired and initiated, and only lastly on the activities of the state, in the areas where individual and local level action proves to be impossible or ineffective. The principle of subsidiarity is in keeping with the logic of the free market economy.

In the awareness of the rural population, and more importantly, in the awareness of the farmers, the factors and conditions which have a decisive influence on their income, welfare and ability to develop their farms lie predominantly outside their control (that is outside the control of individuals or groups of individuals). They feel victimised and helpless and seek protection and support from the state.

The process of adapting the Polish countryside and, more significantly, adapting Polish agriculture to the free market economy is slow and painful. While support for market reforms and private ownership has increased amongst the majority of Poles, amongst farmers it has dropped. Disillusionment with the effects of a decade of transformation is growing, as is scepticism towards market-orientated solutions. Meanwhile, the attitude of „relying on the state” has gained importance. All of these trends make the modernisation of agriculture, and the countryside as a whole, all the more difficult. They also create unfavourable circumstances for the adaptation of the economic structures and mechanisms of Poland to the requirements of the European Union.

## **5. Attitudes to land**

The Poland's integration with the European Union requires accepting the principle of the unrestricted exchange of capital, labour and services and integrating it into the Polish legal system. This in turn entails opening the market for land in Poland to foreigners. Both farmers and the entire rural population oppose this concept.

**Table 4.** Opinions of the rural population and farmers on the right to purchase land by foreigners (data in %)

Should foreigners be allowed to buy land in Poland or should they not be allowed to do so?	Rural population	Farmers
Definitely yes	3	1
Probably yes	10	8
Probably not	20	21
Definitely not	63	68
Difficult to say	4	2

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

Generally, the conclusion must be drawn that farmers (89%), more so than other rural residents (83%) are opposed to selling land to foreigners, and predict that this might cause very serious negative consequences for agriculture and the rural community.

However, this does not mean they exclude the possibility of free trade in land. Almost half of those polled believe that the lack of alternative means of earning a living keeps farmers „on the land”. This relatively liberal stance becomes much more rigid when asked to declare their own attitude towards their land: only 28% claim to be ready to sell. The attitude of the majority is definitely conservative, opposed to selling. Farmers seem to be saying that the land is not for sale. Nonetheless, a more detailed investigation proves these declarations to be, at least for a significant group of farmers, purely verbal and superficial in nature. Specific circumstances or very favourable financial conditions tend to change the farmers’ attitude to land quite radically and cause many of them to be quite ready to sell. **Generally speaking, only a small group of farmers would not sell under any circumstances: only 17% of those polled rejected all of the presented offers.**

Let us now examine the dynamic tendencies in agriculture. Only 6% of the farmers polled declare the willingness to buy land as an element of change in their farm, while only 14% said they would invest „free cash” in land. These are very small numbers. Of course such limited ambitions may be explained by the difficult situation in agriculture in general, low income levels among farmers and their discouragement. However, this passive attitude to land is not a



new phenomenon. Similar attitudes of farmers towards land were revealed in a study conducted in the late 1980's when agriculture experienced very favourable economic conditions. **The passive attitude to land and the absence of a desire to accumulate land are not new, crisis-induced attitudes. This passivity is a well established tendency, which under the current circumstances is particularly conspicuous.**

## **6. Attitudes of farmers and the rural population to the process of change**

Are Polish farmers and rural residents in favour of change in Polish agriculture today, in 1999, or would they prefer to avoid it?

**Table 5.** Attitudes to major change in Polish agriculture (data in %)

<b>Does Polish agriculture, in your opinion, require major change or does it not?</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Definitely yes	66	74
Probably yes	27	23
Probably not	2	1
Difficult to say	5	2

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

As illustrated above, the approval for change is enormous. However, the nature of the change is highly specific. Above all, those polled are demanding change in government agricultural policies, and the source of change is seen as being located outside the farming community and the rural environment. Farmers and rural residents perceive themselves as the objects, rather than the instruments, of change.

**Table 6.** The nature of change expected by the rural population and farmers (data in %)

<b>What kind of change should take place (two choices):</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
1. Higher profitability of agricultural production	67	73
2. Higher interventionist purchases of agricultural produce	25	28
3. Higher subsidies for agricultural production	42	51
4. Cheap loans	26	22

5. Improvement of the quality of farm products	10	6
6. Farmers organising themselves into producers associations	11	7
7. Some farmers moving to other sectors of employment	2	3
8. Increasing the size of the average farm	4	4
9. Increasing productivity per hectare	3	2

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

Thus, according to those polled, change is to occur predominantly in areas which are independent of the farmers themselves. The areas which require the activity of farmers, such as quality improvement, the creation of producer's associations, enlarging farms or increasing productivity per hectare (items 5-9 on the table) are not, according to the majority of those polled, as important as government initiatives.

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at those farmers who perceived themselves as being instrumental to change.

Answers to the questions regarding necessary change were grouped in such a way as to allow the segregation of those who indicated at least once that farmers were themselves responsible for taking action (i.e. chose item 5-9 in the table).

**Table 7.** The role of farmers in the process of change versus the level of education (data in %)

<b>Education</b>	<b>Rural population</b>		<b>Farmers</b>	
	Change is dependent on farmers (choice 5-9)	Change is independent of farmers	Change is dependent on farmers (choice 5-9)	Change is independent of farmers
Elementary	13	87	14	85
Vocational	19	81	12	88
Secondary	36	64	32	68
Higher	39	61	73	27
Total	22	78	18	82

Source: Institute of Public Affairs

As demonstrated above, the more educated participants in our survey see a more active role for farmers in the process of transformation.

The issue of the farmer as the instrument of change was also addressed in a question formulated in a different manner, namely **about the intention to introduce changes in their own farm.**

**Table 8.** The size of the farm versus intended changes (data in %)

Farm area	Do you intend to introduce changes in your farm in the near future or not?	
	No	Yes
Up to 2 ha	88	12
2 – 5 ha	83	17
5 – 10 ha	80	20
Over 10 ha	49	51
Total	78	22

Source: data of the Institute of Public Affairs

At first glance, only a minority of 22% of farmers intend to become the agent rather than the object of change. However, the number of farmers who plan to introduce changes in their farms is more or less equal to the number who sell their produce on the market and treat farming as their sole means of income.

Let us now try to analyse the attitude of the Polish rural population and farmers towards the integration of Poland with the European Union in the context of the changes which will accompany that process. A fundamental question, which relates to the role of the agricultural policy of the European Union in the development of Polish agriculture, has divided the rural population into three almost equal groups: those convinced about the positive, negative and uncertain role of the Union. Among farmers, however, the opinion that the Union's agricultural policy will have a negative influence on the Polish farming is predominant (48%).

**Table 9.** The influence of the agricultural policy of the European Union on Polish agriculture and opinion on the role of farmers in the process of change (data in %)

What, in your opinion, will be the role of the EU agricultural policy in the development of Polish agriculture:	What should be the key changes in Polish agriculture?			
	Rural population		Farmers	
	Change dependent on farmers (choice 5-9)*	Change independent of farmers	Change dependent on farmers (choice 5-9)	Change independent of farmers
Positive	31	69	30	70
Negative	16	84	16	84
No influence	26	74	18	82
Difficult to say	19	81	14	86
Total	22	78	18	82

\* Numbers of items from Table 6

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

It seems that active participation in change and having a sense of influence over the course of events, makes even those changes which are decidedly external in nature (integration with the European Union) appear less threatening.

Having a sense of influence over the process of change also promotes the expectation of achieving personal gain following Poland's integration with the Union. Only one-in-five rural residents expects their own situation to improve as a result of integration, but among those who think it necessary for farmers themselves to take an active role in the process of change, 38% expect an improvement. Similarly, farmers who have a greater sense of influence on the existing circumstances, also display a higher rate of optimism.

An important element in the readiness of farmers to accept change is the willingness to abandon farming, which is a particularly difficult decision for farmers. According to our research a large proportion of farmers and rural residents declare such readiness, particularly with regard to expectations about the future of their children.

**Table 10.** Farmers and the rural population and employment for themselves and their children (data in %)

Answers	If it depended on you, would you most of all like to:		What would you like for your child?	
	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers
Work on your own farm	23	43	10	13
Work in a private company	4	3	5	3
Work in a state enterprise	16	14	16	16
Have my own business	25	16	48	41
Leave the village and work in the city	6	5	10	16
Leave to work abroad	4	4	5	5
Continue working as now	11	9	na	na
Not have to work for a living	6	4	1	2
Difficult to say	5	2	4	5

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

As shown above, working on one's own farm is by no means the most popular means of earning a living for the rural population. Only one-in-eight farmers and one-in-ten rural residents see the future of their own children on the farm. However, **having one's own business** or „working for yourself” (but not in agriculture), is a dream of 25% of rural residents and 16% farmers. Nearly 50% of the rural population and 40% of farmers would choose this type of employment for their children. It is also worth noting that moving to the city or working abroad are not desirable solutions, neither for respondents nor for their children.

One may conclude that the attitude of farmers and the rural population towards the process of change in Polish agriculture, including the process of integration with the European Union, entails a need to play an active role in the transformation process. Those polled who would like to see farmers and the rural population undertake rational steps towards adjustment (eg. expand the size of farms, improve the quality of produce, create producer's associations, find additional sources of income outside farming) are quicker to notice the positive consequences of Poland's membership in the Union.

Parallel to the need to be involved in change, another view of the role of farmers' emerged during the course of our investigations. One can become an actor in events by taking part in protests, road blocks and sit-ins. It is possible to vote against integration with the European Union in a referendum in the belief that the process of restructuring Polish agriculture can be stalled.

## **7. The knowledge of farmers and rural residents about the European Union**

Among the rural residents and farmers themselves the level of support for Poland's integration with the European Union is very low. One of the reasons for the farmers' strong opposition against integrating with the structures of the Union is a lack of information about the practical aspects of integration.

**Table 11.** The knowledge of farmers and the rural population about the European Union (data in %)

<b>How do you evaluate the level of information accessible to you about Poland's integration with the European Union</b>	<b>Rural population '98*</b>	<b>Rural population '99</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
I feel very well informed	-	0	0
I feel well informed	7	9	10
I do not feel well informed	35	38	39
I feel very insufficiently informed	<b>53</b>	<b>28</b>	32
I have no information on the subject	-	<b>23</b>	18
Difficult to say	4	2	1

\*Survey by CBOS: *Current issues and events*, September 1998. The survey did not contain the category „I feel very well informed” and „I have no information on the subject.

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

Farmers and rural residents feel they are very poorly informed about the issue of Poland's integration with the European Union. The data is disturbing – only 9% of rural residents and 10% farmers feel well informed on matters of integration, while as many as 89% feel poorly

informed. As many as 52% of farmers who possess no information on the European Union say they would vote against Poland's integration with the EU in a referendum.

**Table 12.** Assessment of possessed information on Poland's integration with the European Union and the degree of acceptance of the Union (data in %)

Assessment of possessed information about Poland's integration with EU	Acceptance for the European Union (votes in a referendum on accession)							
	For joining the Union		Against joining the Union		I would not vote in referendum		Difficult to say	
	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers
I feel well informed	60	36	22	46	14	11	4	7
I do not feel well informed	54	32	20	49	17	11	9	8
I feel insufficiently informed	28	18	33	45	25	16	14	21
I have no information	10	6	15	37	52	44	23	13
Difficult to say	15	-	-	67	46	-	39	33

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

The number of rural residents supporting integration with the European Union increases when people feel they are well informed: 60% of the rural population who feel well informed intend to vote for Poland's membership in the Union while only 22% would vote against. At the same time, among those polled who have no information about the Union, as many as 52% would not participate in the referendum, 10% would vote for and 15% against Poland joining the organisation.

Young rural residents and young farmers feel best informed about the European Union. The better educated the respondents are, the better informed they feel. Among rural residents with a university degree, only 2% declare that they have no information on the subject, while as many as 40% with only vocational training express this opinion.

The answers indicate the type of information which is most useful to farmers today.



**Table 13.** Information useful to farmers (data in %)

<b>What type of information is in your opinion most useful to farmers today? Choose two answers</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Information about new technologies in agriculture	49	48
Information about how to sell farm produce	37	48
General knowledge – a higher level of education	16	14
Legal information– how to organise producer’s associations, how to conclude contracts with intermediaries	16	20
Economic information, accounting skills	15	13
Specialised information about how to run an ecological farm	10	9
Information helpful in finding a new profession, additional employment, agro-tourism, services, crafts	10	12
Information about farmers and agriculture in EU	10	11
Information about the principles of EU Common Agricultural Policy	10	10
Other types of Information	1	0
Difficult to say	10	5

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

The simplest and most effective information about integration with the European Union is provided by the television and radio media and the press. Differences in the expectations of farmers and the rural population in general are determined by the fact that farmers watch more television programs related to farming and draw their information on the Union from these programmes, while other rural residents watch information programs and news broadcasts such as „Wiadomości”. Specialised brochures reach only about 2% of farmers and rural residents and the scope of this type of informative material is therefore negligible. Significantly, both farmers as well as other rural residents draw their information about the Union from casual conversations and meetings with neighbours, hence from „indirect” sources. As many as 22% of farmers and 15% of rural residents become acquainted with European integration issues in this manner.

**Table 14.** Most prominent sources of information about Poland's integration with the European Union – current status and expectations (data in %)

Answers	Where do you draw your information about integration		Where would you like to draw information?	
	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers
Press for farmers	6	11	14	23
TV programmes for farmers	38	51	50	60
Other TV programmes eg. „Wiadomości” (news)	51	47	39	34
Meetings organised by farming chambers	1	3	13	19
Meetings organised by ODR (Farming Advisory Centres)	1	6	9	18
Meetings organised by Trade Unions	1	2	9	17
Special brochures and information materials	2	2	12	11

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

It is worth noting that both rural residents as well as farmers would like to obtain more information from the farmer orientated print media and from agricultural broadcasts on TV (not from other news programmes), as well as meetings organised by farming chambers, advisory centres and trade unions. **Our respondents want information from sources which are more professional and objective rather than political in nature.** Meetings with representatives of political parties are not regarded as a useful (less than 1% indications) or desirable (about 2% indications) source of information on the process of Poland's integration with the European Union. Similarly Radio Maria or parish meetings are not a source from which farmers draw, or would like to draw information about the Union (indications under 1% and 3% respectively).

When asked directly about the institutions and organisations which are considered trustworthy in providing information on the European Union those polled indicated the Polish Peasant

Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) and the Farmers Trade Union „Samoobrona” (Self defence). However, the role of institutions such as farmers advisory centers and chambers was also significant.

**Table 15.** Organisations considered most trustworthy with respect to information on the European Union (data in %)

Which agricultural organisations or institutions do you consider most trustworthy in connection with providing information about the European Union (not more than three sources)	Rural population	Farmers
Polish Peasant Party (PSL)	31	40
Farming Advisory Centers	23	33
National Federation of Farmers' Societies, Unions and Organisations	20	23
„Samoobrona” Trade Union	20	<b>27</b>
Agricultural Chambers	15	18
Farmers' Trade Union „Solidarność” (Solidarity)	15	13
Ministry of Agriculture	11	8
Unions of producers, co-operatives, sectors	8	13
Difficult to say	<b>32</b>	23

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

However, the above table does not undermine the statement that political parties and trade unions are not considered by farmers to be adequate sources of information about the problems which accompany Poland's accession to the European Union.

The above conclusion is further confirmed when responses about where respondents **obtain** their information about the Union are compared with answers regarding the sources from which they **would like to obtain** this information.

## **8. Hopes and anxieties connected with integration**

Poland's future membership in the European Union has caused a great deal of anxiety in the countryside. An analysis of the opinions regarding the predicted consequences of Poland's accession to the Union indicates that anxieties connected with membership are much more widespread than are the hopes for possible advantages. Farmers constitute the strongest

opposition to Poland's membership in the Union. Their responses are much more pessimistic than the opinions of the rural population in general; they are less likely to indicate the advantages of Poland's accession and more prone to express misgivings. Generally speaking two thirds of the farmers polled believe that integration with the European Union is likely to bring more losses to Polish agriculture than gains.

**The anxieties of farmers and the rural residents in general are economic in nature** (small farms fear bankruptcy, flooding the Polish market with Union food products, foreigners buying up land). Fears connected with the sphere of religion and national identity – i.e. the weakening of religious attitudes and patriotism among the Polish people - are much less frequent. A nation-wide survey confirms the thesis about the economic rather than the cultural nature of the fears connected with European integration.

**Table 16.** Anxieties connected with integration with the European Union (data in %)

<b>Poland's integration with the European Union causes anxiety: do you personally fear:</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>Difficult to say</b>	
	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Impoverishment of the countryside	65	78	18	12	17	10
Growth of unemployment in the villages	72	83	13	8	14	9
Bankruptcy of a large number of farms	84	93	7	3	9	4
Flooding the Polish market with EU food products	80	91	9	4	11	5
Weakening of Polish patriotism	34	45	47	40	19	15
Production limits	66	76	15	10	19	13
Foreigners buying up land	79	87	9	5	13	7

Increased difficulties in selling domestic farm products	73	84	14	8	14	9
Decrease of religious feeling	22	30	61	56	17	14
Other fears	9	13	49	47	42	40

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

**In their opinions regarding the positive effects of integration, the rural residents and farmers agreed that it will facilitate access to modern technology and that the price of land will go up.** Generally, the non-economic advantages of integration such as better prospects for children and the improved status of Poland in Europe were not disputed. However, issues such as the appearance of new export markets and job opportunities outside the agricultural sector met with considerable scepticism, especially among farmers.

**Table 17.** Hopes connected with Poland's membership in the European Union (data in %)

<b>The rural populations is doubtful about Poland's accession to the European Union.</b> <b>When we consider hopes and advantages, will it in your opinion cause:</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>Difficult to say</b>	
	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
An increase in the price of land	54	52	16	24	30	24
Increased profitability of farm production (subsidies, higher prices)	35	27	32	47	34	26
Increased assurance of farm production (guaranty of sale, contracts)	36	29	30	46	34	25
Subsidies for Polish farmers as in the EU (Common Agricultural Policy)	46	35	22	38	32	27
Access to modern farming technology	63	61	14	20	23	19
Employment opportunities outside agriculture	35	25	27	41	38	34
Better future for the children, contact with the outside world	51	48	15	21	34	32
New markets	46	33	23	40	32	27
Improvement of the status of Poland and Poles in Europe	48	40	19	30	33	31
Other advantages	10	7	39	45	51	49

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

The farmers' fears are very concrete and quantifiable and are generally related to their basic economic interests. The predicted threats are not balanced by the vague or unpredictable advantages of integration. Hence, farmers foresee a very pessimistic scenario which includes the bankruptcy of a large number of farms, the flooding of the Polish market with EU food products, difficulties with selling domestic produce and consequently the growth of rural unemployment and the pauperisation of the countryside.

Moreover, the purchase of land by foreigners causes serious apprehension and the fear that Poland will be „colonised” and that Poles will be forced to work for „foreigners”. The Union's principle of free trade in land caused the most anxiety among the respondents.

The fear of land being purchased by foreigners is so strong that a majority of farmers as well as rural residents tend to question possible macroeconomic advantages associated with the sale of land such as the creation of new jobs and the modernisation of agriculture.

**Anxiety regarding the effects of integration and the ensuing opposition to integration may be caused by the fact that farmers feel excluded from decision making on a number of issues which are vital to their interests.** In the majority of areas they were asked to evaluate, both farmers and rural residents perceived Poland as being handicapped in comparison to the countries of the European Union. **The respondents most frequently referred to the living conditions in rural areas and the standard of living of farmers as the areas where Poland lags behind the European Union.** Similarly, in most cases it was admitted that Poland lagged behind in the mechanisation of farm work as well as in the productivity and efficiency of agriculture. However, despite the technological drawbacks of Polish production, the majority of those polled (54% farmers and 40% rural residents) expressed the opinion that the higher quality of Polish farm produce was a significant advantage of the Polish agricultural sector.

Civilizational distance (the difference in environmental conditions, the level of education and skills) was noted less often than economic and technological differences, while the majority of farmers and rural residents think that Poles definitely do not rank lower than European Union residents in terms of diligence and work ethic.



**Table 18.** Differences between Poland and the European Union in selected areas (data in %)

In your opinion is there a difference between Poland and the European Union in:	Yes, in favour of the EU		Yes, in favour of Poland		No differences		Difficult to say	
	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers	Rural population	Farmers
People's work ethic	13	12	27	39	44	37	16	12
Honesty	15	15	17	22	45	42	22	22
Level of education and skills	42	45	14	11	27	28	16	16
Living conditions in the country	82	84	4	3	4	5	10	8
Farmers' standard of living	86	86	2	2	4	4	8	8
Quality of produce (milk, meat, wheat)	22	16	40	54	25	19	14	11
Productivity and efficiency of agriculture	8	65	6	8	10	12	16	15
Mechanisation of farm chores	83	86	3	2	5	4	9	8
State of the environment	53	45	16	24	10	13	21	19

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

Most of the farmers polled believe that products from their farms are not only cheaper (70%) but also of higher quality (57%) than those offered by European Union food producers. However, this conviction about the competitiveness of their products is accompanied by anxiety over increased difficulty in selling them after Poland joins the Union. Most of the farmers (62%) predict that despite the expansion of the market for agricultural produce their products will find buyers predominantly in Poland, while only a small minority (1%) expect to export the majority of their goods to EU countries.

**It seems that the perceived barrier lies not in the problems associated with producing high quality and competitively priced food, but in the predicted difficulties of promoting it and introducing it to the common market, in light of competitive pressure from the more efficient (as the farmers themselves admit) and better organised farmers from the EU countries, where co-operatives, sector organisations and producer's associations have a significant influence on organising the market for food products.** What is equally important is that the anxiety concerning the competitiveness of Polish agricultural products in the European Union is not only felt by farmers with small holdings, small turnover and those who are generally dissatisfied with their farms, pessimistic about the future of Polish agriculture within the Union and thus opposed to integration. This fear is also expressed by producers owning the largest and most efficient farms, who are pleased with their current standing and support integration.

According to the rural population and farmers the future of Polish agriculture will be one of the most difficult issues in the accession negotiations (purchasing of land by foreigners in Poland and restrictions on farm production, i.e. quotas, were also included among the problematic issues, the latter particularly by farmers).

**Table 19.** Difficult areas of negotiations (data in %)

<b>Which of the following areas do you believe will cause the greatest difficulty in the negotiations on Poland's joining the European Union. Choose no more than two answers.</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Polish mining	23	20
Environment protection	17	13
The purchase of land by foreigners in Poland	33	33
Poles working in EU countries	18	16
The future of Polish agriculture in the EU	43	54
Restrictions on agricultural production (quotas)	25	32
Difficult to say	17	12

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs.

In view of the above, an essential question is whether farmers and rural residents in general have sufficient trust in the Polish negotiators. Will these negotiators defend the interests of the Polish farmers and try to achieve the most favourable conditions, or will they sacrifice those interests in order to achieve advantages in other areas? The opinions of rural residents on this matter do take into consideration the context of the negotiations. The majority believe that during the course of negotiations, the Polish government will have to make certain concessions concerning agriculture. However, this does not amount to a sense of betrayal accompanied by the conviction that Polish negotiators have other priorities and will not attempt to negotiate the most favourable circumstances. Nonetheless, in this respect farmers tend to be more pessimistic than the rural population in general and are more likely to express the fear that Polish negotiators will sacrifice the interests of farmers in order to achieve better results in other areas (29% and 19% respectively).

**Table 20.** Trust in Polish negotiators (data in %)

<b>In your opinion, during the course of negotiations with the European Union the Polish government will:</b>	<b>Rural population</b>	<b>Farmers</b>
Primarily attempt to achieve conditions most favourable for Polish agriculture	14	10
Have to make concessions concerning certain issues regarding agriculture	48	47
Will give up achieving good conditions for agriculture in favour of other areas	19	29
Difficult to say	19	14

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs.

**The pessimism revealed in the farmers' responses may constitute an additional difficulty in the process of restructurization. Pessimism in evaluating one's own opportunities and a lack of faith in the ability to meet the challenge of integration, may all lead to a passive attitude and reluctance to act, while what is most needed is actively catching-up with the lessons of capitalism, making use of the experience of Western organisations, and participation in the market.** Bringing this experience to farmers should be one of the purposes of the system of information about integration.

## **9. Political attitudes of the rural population**

The best measure of political attitudes is found in general views about what politics or political activity actually is (the sphere of joint activity of various institutional actors as opposed to the exclusive sphere of activity of the government and state). In view of the results of a survey of rural residents, it must be stated that a „passive” (where „passivity” is seen as a desirable attitude) rather than „active” view of politics is characteristic among the farmers. Seen from a different angle, it is more a „state oriented” than „liberal” attitude. It is expressed, on the one hand, by a low level of readiness to independently formulate constructive solutions to problems in social and economic life and on the other, in the wide-spread expectation among the farmers that the government should exert greater influence on agricultural policy. At the same time, it seems that the remaining rural population, while expecting more government involvement in

agriculture, is less supportive of the non-liberal model. Young people and persons with secondary education constitute a significant section in this group.

Another dimension of political attitudes is found in participation in political and public life. Activity in this respect, which is expressed in voting in parliamentary or presidential elections, is low in the countryside (in 1997 only 42% of those entitled to vote actually participated in the first round of 1995 - 60%), despite the fact that declared participation is much higher (64% and 96% respectively).

A significant factor in political activity is education: the higher the level of education, the greater the readiness to vote in elections and read the press (there is a direct correlation between the frequency of reading the daily press and voting in elections). Also worth noting is the fact that young voters have the lowest declared abstention rate in polls surveying voter frequency. Voting in elections is also related to strong attitudes either positive or negative towards the current government. It seems that the lowest rate of participation (54%) and the highest rate of abstention (32%) or indecision is declared by respondents who described their attitude to the government of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek as indifferent. Both supporters and opponents declared equal rates of participation: over 70%.

Membership in political parties and organisations is another form of participation in political life. Only 4% of the rural residents declared membership in farmers' or other rural organisations (primarily to the Society of Rural Housewives or Polish Peasant Party). Membership among farmers is slightly higher (14%). Almost one in three of this group respectively declared membership in the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) and in the National Federation of Farmers and Agricultural Unions and Organisations. Potential PSL and SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) voters dominate in this group, which is composed mainly of middle-aged (35 to 54) farmers and owners of large farms of over 10 standard hectares.

Another form of active participation in politics consists in personal involvement in various kinds of protests. Rural residents and farmers widely support all forms of protests to date. Over 50% of farmers and 30% of rural residents would be prepared to participate in collective protest actions such as road blocks, street demonstrations, blocking access to and sit-ins of public offices.



**Table 21.** Acceptance of farmers' participation in specific forms of protest (data in %)

Farmers protests have taken place this year. Do you believe farmers should: participate in such forms of protest as	Society in general*		Rural population		Farmers	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Collecting signatures under petitions and protests	74	20	87	8	90	8
Street demonstrations	45	51	70	24	82	15
Blocking access to public offices	-	-	61	32	78	18
Road blocks	25	72	57	40	70	26
Sit-ins of public buildings	30	65	58	35	74	20

\* In the CBOS survey of a representative sample of adult Poles (N=1099) the question was: „Do you or do you not accept such forms of protest against government policy as...”

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs.

Road blocks are considered by the rural population to be the most effective form of protest: 44% of farmers declare that they would be ready to participate in road blocks and state that it is an effective method of protest.

Farm size seems to be the defining factor both with respect to support for various types of protest, as well as for the readiness to participate personally in protest actions. The larger the farm, the greater support for protests: 84% of the owners of the largest farms support farmers' participation in road blocks and three-quarters declare they would be prepared to participate.

Supporters of road blocks are found primarily among the potential voters of „Samoobrona”, the Polish Peasant Party and SLD. However, over one-in-three supporters of the „Solidarity Electoral Action” (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność - AWS) support farmers' participation in these activities.

It seems that the significant support for protest actions and the general readiness to participate in them is of greater importance than the declared participation in elections, because it

indicates that the rural population, and most of all farmers, believe that the former method of fighting for their interests, based on voicing demands and exerting pressure on the authorities, is by far more effective.

The last measure of political attitudes is based on sympathies and electoral preferences. In comparison with 1997 there is a marked fall in support for AWS and a slight growth in support for the PSL, while support for the SLD remains unchanged. The percentage of votes left over is therefore quite considerable: 15% of the two-thirds of the population who were planning to vote did not know who they were going to vote for, while 23% had not made up their minds whether they were going to participate. This totals 33% of the entire rural population polled.

The increasing support of the rural population for „Samoobrona” is also clearly visible, and may be attributed to the popularity of this organisation among the largest group of rural residents, namely farmers. However, it must be noted that Andrzej Lepper’s group also enjoys considerable popularity among the unemployed.

**Table 22.** A comparison of the party preferences of the rural population from the parliamentary elections of 1997 with their declarations in June 1999 (data in %)

Party	Rural population		Farmers
	Elections 1997	Preferences June 1999	Preferences June 1999
AWS	36	16	11
SLD	20	20	20
PSL	18	22	37
UW	7	5	1
„Samoobrona”	0	4	9
Others	19	18	9

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

An analysis of the voting declarations in presidential elections leads to the conclusion that support for Aleksander Kwaśniewski prior to the presidential election campaign was considerably higher than that for any of the other candidates. On the one hand the number of



his supporters has grown in comparison with the elections of 1995, on the other, he has no counter-candidate who would enjoy a similar level of support in the countryside. More significantly, this support was very high not only among supporters of PSL and SLD - the parties which previously formed a government coalition, but also among supporters of the groups which were in opposition at the time.

Among all the candidates who represent the peasant or farmer groups, Andrzej Lepper enjoys the greatest support (8% of the rural population and 14% farmers). It is worth noting that the percentage of votes cast in 1995 in favour of peasant party candidates (14%) has not undergone significant change when compared to the declared support for such candidates in June 1999 (17%).

**Table 23.** Comparison of declared support for presidential candidates in June 1999 with votes cast during the presidential elections of 1995 (data in %)

Candidate	Rural population		Farmers
	1995 elections	2000 elections	2000 elections
Aleksander Kwaśniewski	34	45	39
Andrzej Lepper	3	8	14
Marian Krzaklewski	-	8	3
Waldemar Pawlak ('95)	11	-	-
Jarosław Kalinowski (2000)	-	6	12
Lech Wałęsa	34	5	3
Jan Olszewski	6	4	3

Source: data from the Institute of Public Affairs

One may conclude that it is primarily people directly and exclusively employed in agriculture i.e. those upon whom the future situation of Polish agriculture depends the most, who regard the state as an actor whose responsibility it is to play a permanent and active role in the rural economy. This is not to say that farmers do not consider themselves responsible for the future of Polish agriculture; to some degree they do. But, generally they do not seem to realise that they themselves must and can initiate change. Hence, the support for farmers' protests. This reflects the farmers' strongly „state oriented” view of politics, which results in a demand-based attitude towards the state. This in turn has lead to growing support for the Polish Peasant Party and „Samoobrona”, whose slogans do not call for individual, constructive action undertaken by farmers as a means of changing their circumstances.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL AND INFORMATION POLICIESIN THE PRE-ACCESSION PERIOD**

*Studies conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA), a publication<sup>1</sup> based on them and a panel discussion held at an IPA conference in November 1999, offer a number of conclusions vital for*

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<sup>1</sup> Peasant, farm worker, farmer? Poland's EU Accesssion – Hopes and Apprehensions of the Polish Rural Countryside', a publication by Barbara Fedyszak-Radziejowska, Maria Halamska, Andrzej Rosner, Jerzy Wilkin, Xymena Dolińska, Dorota

*agricultural and information policies in the period of Poland's preparations for EU membership. Recommendations outlined below only concern issues taken up in the studies, therefore, they do not cover the entire scope of state policies toward the rural countryside and agriculture.*

- 1. It is necessary to change criteria used to describe the Polish rural countryside in statistical studies conducted on a mass scale (e.g. by the Main Office of Statistics). In particular, this concerns the criterion of 'being part of the farming sector', since it does not reflect the present situation in Polish agriculture.**

The criterion of 'being part of the farming sector' which has been in use so far appears to be too broad. In studies and statistical reports by the Main Office of Statistics (MOS), a farmer is a person who runs a farm with an area of more than 1 hectare. However, this criterion does not reflect the growing diversification among farmers as a social group. Neither does it take account of the role the running of such a farm plays in the income structure of households. Last but not least, it fails to cover the 'self-awareness' of farmers. Taking into consideration such factors as making contributions to the Rural Insurance Fund and deriving income from farming as the sole or main source of income (instead of supplementing income to a minor or marginal extent), the number of actual farmers appears far lower than that quoted by present official statistics.

Using the source of income as a criterion of 'being part of the farming sector', the large group of farmers (as distinguished according to criteria used in official statistics), can be divided into the following four sub-groups:

- i. Farmers proper, for whom farming is the sole source of income (F)
- ii. ‘Mainly farmers’, i.e. those for whom farming is the main, but not the only source of income. The farmer’s family also derives its income from other sources (MF).
- iii. ‘Also farmers’ who mainly derive their income from outside agriculture (AF)
- iv. ‘Nominal farmers’ for whom and for whose families agriculture is a negligible source of income (NF)

Diversification of farmers based on the criterion of income (in percentage)

	Group i ‘F’	Group ii ‘MF’	Group iii ‘AF’	Group iv ‘NF’
Participation in group under study	27	23	32	15

Actual farmers include persons from groups ‘F’ and ‘MF’. This means that only 50 per cent of farmers, described as such on the basis of criteria applied in statistics conducted on a mass scale, genuinely rely on farming for all or most of their income.

**2. The diversification of countryside dwellers and the rate of changes in their professional structure and sources of income are the reason why economic, social and information policies should not treat countryside dwellers as a monolithic social group.**

According to existing official data, among countryside dwellers (14.7 million) groups of peasants (54 per cent) and non-peasants (46 per cent) can be distinguished. Studies indicate that along with the passing of time, important changes have been occurring in terms of income structure. The proportion of persons who rely on income from outside agriculture is growing significantly.

The scale of registered and hidden unemployment in the countryside is growing. Demographic processes will cause the number of people in productive age to rise in the next few years. In the countryside, this group will grow by 140-150 thousand each year. Given limited opportunities to migrate to cities, almost all persons who reach productive age will remain in the countryside, exerting additional pressure on local labour markets. At the same time, the restructuring of farming will cause employment to decrease in agricultural production. Overt unemployment in the countryside can be expected to grow.

The improvement of the situation in the rural labour market will depend on how many new jobs are created, how private enterprise will develop, how many local, sub-regional business centres can be formed and on how many people can migrate to urban areas. These goals, however, cannot be achieved through the efforts of countryside dwellers alone. They require an injection of investment capital, the development of infrastructure and an efficient state-assisted credit and investment policy, supported by EU funding. Existing policies and instruments applied in this field are regarded as insufficient.

**3. Due to the considerable diversification of countryside dwellers in terms of social and professional structure, it is necessary to clearly define separate (but complementary) objectives and instruments of state policies toward:**

- **rural areas**
- **agricultural producers.**

Roughly fifty per cent of countryside dwellers do not own farms. Thus they may only be beneficiaries of rural development policies. Among farm owners, the majority (about two thirds) produce only for their own consumption, relying on various other sources of income. Thus, they may only marginally benefit from funds meant to support agricultural producers. It seems that instruments should be applied toward this group to prompt its members to decide whether they should carry on mainly as farmers or outside farming, perhaps by taking up other jobs in the countryside. It is vital to improve the effectiveness of even small farms and to determine the scope and manner of social policies addressed to those groups that are economically the weakest.

It is necessary to offer a more precise simulation of expected results of European integration for the aforementioned groups. It is also vital to come up with adjustment strategies for those groups concerning their future role within the European Union. Such simulations should then be broadly publicized. Only about 15 per cent of countryside dwellers are genuine farmers who produce for profit, relying on income from their farms. It is only them who stand a chance of successfully competing with EU farmers. Only this group of farmers will benefit from CAP funds once Poland becomes an EU member.

**4. There is a need to come up with a policy of supporting the concentration, development and modernization of production means in agriculture.**

Countryside dwellers appear to be saving less and less. Their investment preferences are changing. Investments in farm production have been recorded in just over ten per cent of farms in the past few years. In terms of investment priorities, housing came top of the list. Polish agriculture is unable to significantly develop and modernize farm production means based on its own resources.

- 5. While drawing up a policy that would allow foreigners to freely purchase land in Poland, one should take into account the reluctance of farmers to sell land to foreigners, but also the fact that farmers are not averse toward selling land in general.**

Taking stock of farmers' views on the possibility of selling their land, you become distinctly aware of their reluctance to sell land to foreigners. They expect that this would bring a myriad of negative results for farmers and the rural countryside.

This is not to say, however, that they rule out selling the land in principle. When you analyse farmers' attitudes, you notice that their declared opposition may only be a facade. Almost half the farmers think that farmers stay on the land only because they have no alternative means of earning a living. Changes in personal circumstances and lucrative offers tend to radically change farmers' attitudes toward land, prompting them to sell it. Only a relatively small percentage of farmers ( 17 per cent of those polled) would refuse all offers to sell their land. This data sheds new light on farmers' perceived reluctance to sell land to foreigners. It seems that it is fairly superficial.

- 6. Agricultural policies should take account of farmers' very passive attitude toward land, i.e. the fact that a vast proportion of farmers do not wish to expand. Moreover, they appear keen to give up farming, but are reluctant to leave the countryside. This holds true both about their own future and their children's future.**

Only a marginal percentage of farmers appear keen to purchase land to introduce changes in their farms or to invest their disposable income in this way. This lack of interest may be put down to the poor shape of Polish agriculture in general, the falling incomes of farmers and their pessimism. However, the passive attitude toward expansion is nothing new. Earlier studies conducted in the late 'Eighties<sup>2</sup>, when the situation of farmers was not as perceived as bad, demonstrated an overwhelmingly passive attitude as well. The lack of will to expand does not, therefore, stem from the present crisis alone. It is a continuation of earlier attitudes, which is now becoming increasingly manifest.

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<sup>2</sup> Re. an international comparative study conducted in three Polish communities in the autumn of 1988. A group of 151 farmers was covered by the study.

At the same time, a large percentage of farmers declare their readiness to give up farming, especially when they express their expectations concerning their children's future. Both countryside dwellers and farmers would prefer their children to run their own businesses outside farming. Only one in eight farmers and one in ten countryside dwellers see the future of their children on a farm.

- 7. It appears vital to disseminate knowledge about the general principles of EU operation and the Common Agricultural Policy among farmers and other countryside dwellers. On the one hand, they should be informed about the potential benefits for Polish farmers, on the other about the necessary scope of preparations for the implementation of EU policies.**

Polish farmers and other countryside dwellers know very little about the EU and CAP. At the same time they are not ready to actively work toward Poland's future EU membership. Among the main directions of EU adjustment, Polish farmers listed: increasing the size of farms (through the concentration of land in larger farms, the closure of small farms, purchasing more land etc.) and getting organized in producers' groups, associations etc. Farmers, therefore, are aware that the present large number of small farms that are not part of any organization will be unable to successfully compete with larger, better equipped and better organized EU farms. At the same time, Polish farmers do not appear keen to do anything to change the present sorry state of affairs.

- 8. It seems crucial to support and promote various forms of co-operation among farmers and countryside dwellers to resolve their problems and meet their needs.**

Among countryside dwellers, especially farmers, anti-free market attitudes are widespread. Farmers are generally in favour of state intervention in the economy. More and more farmers look to the state for solutions, having failed to find support in agricultural and rural institutions and organizations. It is vital to counteract those exaggerated expectations through adequate information and educational policies. Farmers' organizations and peasant parties seem to be focusing too much on mobilizing their respective electorates to put pressure on the government to extend subsidies for farming and to impose protectionist measures against food imports, instead of encouraging social mechanisms of self-help.

- 9. There is a clear need to prepare the Polish countryside and agriculture for their future role within the EU and to take advantage of funds and programmes it offers.**



Countryside dwellers and farmers may be aware of the need to start preparatory adjustments, but they do not appear ready to take any steps to face up to the competition of EU producers or to take advantage of opportunities offered by the Common Agricultural Policy. All organizations active in agriculture and in the rural countryside must get mobilized to a maximum extent to enable agriculture and rural communities to function within the EU and to use the opportunities it offers in terms of funds and assistance programmes. This does not mean, however, that the state should merely act as an observer. To the contrary, the state and relevant organizations should work together in the implementation of these objectives.

**10. There is plenty of room for such institutions and organizations as agricultural chambers, local self-management bodies and groups of producers to develop their activities.**

Farmers' present reluctance to get together to achieve common goals, to become more effective in economic terms, makes them helpless in confrontation with reality. That is why they attach such high hopes to state intervention.

**11. Information reaching countryside dwellers should stress the need for the restructuring of agriculture and changes in the rural countryside in such a way as to prevent the process from being perceived as one forced by Poland's EU accession. Anti-EU postures among the rural population are often linked with the conviction that Polish reforms are imposed by the European Union. One should stress, therefore, that the restructuring of the countryside must be carried out regardless. While the EU is not the cause of problems, it may be helpful in this process (structural funds). In information policies one should take into consideration the fact that farmers' apprehensions concerning EU integration are primarily of an economic, not cultural nature.**

The negative assessment of the results of agricultural policies, the worsening of the income situation of countryside dwellers, troubles on the agricultural market, perceived partly as a result of foreign trade policies and the inadequate operation of farmers' organizations, are all the reasons farmers top the list of social groups among opposed to Poland's EU membership. The vast majority of farmers think that EU integration will do Polish agriculture more harm than good. Their apprehensions take a concrete economic and political shape. Most farmers and countryside dwellers fear the impoverishment of the countryside, growing unemployment, the collapse of a large number of farms, foreigners buying up

Polish land and difficulties with selling farm produce. Other fears (e.g. concerning weakening patriotism and religiousness) are expressed to a lesser extent.

Information policies concerning the results of EU integration should focus on overcoming the pessimism evident in the attitudes of most farmers. One should oppose the rhetoric of 'liquidation' (of farms, jobs). Instead, constructive, positive language should be used.

- 12. Farmers expect matter-of-fact, concrete and professional information (not political information), referring to the economy. They are mainly interested in new farm technologies and marketing techniques. They look for such information in specialist media addressed to them (farmers' magazines, television programmes.)**

Pessimism evident among farmers may prove one more obstacle for the restructuring of agriculture. Pessimism in the assessment of their own capabilities, lack of confidence in their ability to meet challenges posed by EU integration may lead to passive attitudes, whereas what is needed is brushing up on the knowledge of free market principles, taking advantage of western experiences in getting organized for a common purpose and actively taking part in the agricultural market. The EU integration information system should make farmers and countryside dwellers aware of these points.

Studies reveal that farmers and countryside dwellers would like to obtain information on agricultural technologies, sales of their products, legal regulations, getting organized in producers' groups, concluding contracts with intermediaries, accounting, the situation of farmers and agriculture in EU countries, CAP principles and ways of mastering new skills.

- 13. Countryside dwellers rely on different sources of information than farmers. They expect to find out about the EU from newspapers and national TV networks. They should become the target of 'rural-' rather than 'agricultural-oriented' information. In particular, they are interested in new job opportunities.**

Meanwhile, farmers' and educational programmes on public television fail to meet this objective. They are perceived as too politicized and lacking practical information that would shape the views of countryside dwellers on EU integration.

- 14. The information campaign should be stepped up. Both farmers and countryside dwellers are keen to receive more information, in which they are genuinely interested.**

It is quite obvious that information should be formulated clearly. It should respect views represented by target audiences and readers. It is also very important to come up with the guidelines of information policies. Countryside dwellers and farmers appear keen to use aforementioned sources of information to a much greater extent than now. One should bear in mind that in countries which were formerly getting ready for EU membership, a nationwide debate was launched prior to membership. Wide-ranging information campaigns were launched.

- 15. An information system, even if it were positively to affect the postures of countryside dwellers and farmers, cannot take the place of a matter-of-fact programme of proposed transformations in the countryside.**

Farmers do not only negatively assess the government's policy toward agriculture, but most of them also think that the government lacks a programme for the development of the countryside and agriculture. This assessment, coupled with farmers' expectations that virtually everything concerning them depends on state authorities, is evidence of the fact that according to countryside dwellers, adequate conditions for changes of the system have not been created. Therefore it is impossible to implement the principle of self-help and the building of a civic-minded society. By contrast, at the foundations of EU's political, economic and social order, lies a system whereby the well-being, advancement and position of citizens is primarily determined by their own active posture, hard work and knowledge, and less so by grassroots collective work. The role of the state is limited solely to those areas where it is impossible or unviable to find solutions on the personal and local level.

- 16. At a time of such rapid transformations, the postures and views of farmers and countryside dwellers should be steadily monitored. They make it possible to gauge the public reception of policies, the effectiveness of their instruments and the effectiveness and results of transmitted information.**